

CABINET

4 SEPTEMBER 2000

INTRODUCTION OF A REPAIRS REPORTING WEBSITE

Report of the Director of Housing

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks approval for the introductions of a repairs reporting website which will enable tenants to report repairs via the use of the Internet.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Members will be aware that part of the Government's thrust to modernise local government includes a requirement for authorities to introduce E-Commerce solutions. In fact, specific targets have been set by Government to move this agenda forward apace.
- 1.2 In line with this requirement and as part of the Department's overall drive to improve and develop its services to the public, a 'Repairs Reporting Website' has been developed which is now ready to be launched.
- 1.3 The report **recommends** the Committee to approve the introduction of a Repairs Reporting Website and to officially launch the new site from the 4 September, 2000.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The cost of establishing the Website has been calculated at £4,300. In addition, it is estimated that the cost of maintaining the Site will be £1,400 per annum. However against this, it is anticipated that eventually, savings of £7.5k per year will be made by allowing members of the public direct access to the repairs reporting system and therefore cutting down on staff time and bureaucracy.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION/APPENDICES

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Housing Repairs Service won Beacon Status for the Council in December 1999. As part of this prestigious award, local authorities are required to share best practice and to learn from each other so the general level of services in local government improves over a period of time.
- 1.2 In line with this requirement, the Department has been considering what other providers have to offer which could be imported in to Leicester to improve our service to tenants. Two other organisations (Knowsley Council and the London and Quadrant HA) already have in place a Website for reporting repairs. Following an examination of these sites and discussions with officers from those organisations, the Department has developed its own Website which will enable tenants to order a repair on-line from the comfort of their own home. It is also the intention to provide the tenant booklet "Tenants Guide to Housing Repairs" on-line and regular newsletters on issues affecting tenants. The Department will also be able to build up a data base and use the E-mail addresses as a resource to "check out" customer opinion on issues affecting tenants in the future.
- 1.3 In addition, Members will be aware that the Government's agenda for modernising local government includes promoting the electronic delivery of services. The Prime Minister has set specific targets for Central Government. These are: 25% of services capable of electronic delivery by 2002 and 100% by 2005. The Government wants all local authorities to move towards 100% electronic delivery of those services which can be delivered using new technology.
- 1.4 Consultation with local authorities is underway to define one or two best value performance indicators for measuring their progress toward E-government. Local authorities will be encouraged initially to set their

own targets. National E-commerce targets will be set for local government in 2002 when a set of data is available for year 2001/2002 to show how local authorities are performing.

- 1.5 In anticipation of this requirement and as part of the Department's overall drive to improve and develop its services to the public, a 'Repairs Reporting Website' which has been developing is now ready to be launched.
- 1.6 Members are recommended to approve the introduction of a Repairs Reporting Website for the City Council and to officially launch the new site from the 4 September, 2000.

2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The launch of the Repairs Reporting Website will be of particular benefit to housebound people who currently find it difficult to get to the Neighbourhood offices to raise a repair and/or to people with a hearing impediment who may find using the telephone an inconvenience.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report although safeguards will be built in to ensure malicious people do not access and overload the system with bogus requests for repairs.

4. SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 By making the Repairs Reporting System available on-line in peoples homes, it will enable them to order repairs directly with the Council and thereby reduce the need to make >unnecessary= journeys to other contact points in the City.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report has no crime and disorder implications.

6. DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Executive and Town Clerk and Director of Corporate Services have both been consulted in the preparation of this report. The Leicester Federation of Tenants Association (LFTA has also been consulted).

7. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

- 7.1 This report meets the Committee s overall Quality of Life Aim for the Department "A decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester", and within that Key Objective 1 - To improve the condition of Leicester's housing stock and resolve unfitness in all sectors.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

8.1 Background Papers

File on the introduction of a Repairs Reporting Website in the Housing Department.

DETR consultation paper AInformation Age Government - Targets for Local Government published 27th June 2000 by Central Local Liaison Group.

9. AUTHORS OF REPORT

9.1 Dave Pate, extension 6801 and Ian Marlow 6804